

September 7, 2017

U.S. Representative Ann Wagner
435 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Wagner:

Our organizations write to *strongly* support the *Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act of 2017* which will empower law enforcement to effectively combat online sex trafficking hubs that provide a safe haven for modern day slave traders. We commend you for shining a light on the online marketplaces that profit from the growing epidemic of sex trafficking in the United States, and we encourage Congress and President Trump to join your effort to amend Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act to protect our most vulnerable citizens who are ensnared in the online sex trade.

Also, we want to thank you for your determined efforts to expose Backpage.com which has profited from the suffering of untold women and children by posting ads selling trafficking victims who end up being raped hundreds of times for money. Congress never intended Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act to protect a business that tailored its site to make underage sex trafficking easier. Nonetheless, federal courts have ruled websites that facilitate sex trafficking are immune from lawsuits brought by their victims, no matter how complicit the sites are or how terrible the harm caused.

This is simply wrong and the *Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act of 2017* would clarify Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act to ensure that websites that facilitate sex trafficking can be held liable and that their victims can get justice. The legislation would: amend Section 230 to allow State authorities to investigate and prosecute websites that facilitate sex trafficking using State criminal statutes that prohibit sex trafficking or sexual exploitation of children; amend Section 230 to allow victims of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation of children to exercise civil remedies; amend 18 U.S.C. § 1591 to define “participation in a venture;” and amend 18 U.S.C. § 1591 to clarify that it is unlawful for a provider to publish information provided by an information content provider, with reckless disregard that the information is in furtherance of a sex trafficking offense.

Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act of 2017 is an important and critically needed reform that will protect women and children without undermining internet freedom or the first amendment. The vast majority of trafficking victims were sold on Backpage.com. Congress never intended Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act to serve as a liability shield to companies so that they could profit from the sale of women and children for sexual exploitation.

Thank you for considering the views of our members and supporters, for whom combatting human trafficking is one of their top legislative concerns.

Sincerely,

Timothy R. Head
Executive Director
Faith & Freedom Coalition

Dr. Russell Moore
President
Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission

Patrick A. Trueman
President & CEO
National Center on Sexual Exploitation

David Christensen
Vice President for Government Affairs
Family Research Council